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PHILIPPINES

EDUCATION

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE : ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION AND LIVELIHOOD INCREASED

BACKGROUND



Once one of the best in all of Asia, the education system of the Philippines has deteriorated significantly in recent years, both in terms of quality and access. The fundamental causes of this decline are slow economic growth, inadequate government revenues and rapid population growth. Corruption and flawed management exacerbate the problem. These factors contribute to poor quality teacher training, shortage of teachers, overcrowded and under-equipped classrooms, increasing drop-out rates and insufficient access to education for the poor.

These problems are particularly acute in the conflict-affected areas of Mindanao, especially in the ARMM. About 21% of the barangays in the ARMM are without schools. Because of a major shortage of teachers, student-teacher ratios in the ARMM are 80-100 to 1. Though 93 % of the school-aged-population enrolls in grade one, 60% of the students drop out before they complete elementary school. These factors along with the conflict and lack of job-creating investment in the ARMM have contributed to high unemployment in the region. More boys drop out than girls, and there is widespread concern that, in the absence of employment, they may be recruited by criminal elements and secessionist groups.

OUR RESPONSE

To help address the challenges in the Philippine education sector and to reduce the perpetuation of conflict by addressing the social, economic and political marginalization of disadvantaged groups in conflict-prone areas, most notably Mindanao, **USAID/Philippines** developed an **Education Strategic Objective (SO I)** as part of its FY 2005-2009 strategy. Its overall aim is increased access to quality education and livelihood skills in selected areas, particularly those most affected by conflict and poverty.

The SO will be largely implemented under a single project, the **Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills (EQuALLS)** project. The project will carry out targeted interventions aimed at producing visible improvements in education quality and access, including livelihood training needs of out-of-school youth, and in related policy constraints. The primary focus of efforts to improve both access to and quality of education will be on grades 1-3. Poor teaching and learning in grades 1-3, overcrowded classes, or the lack of access to a school or an effective alternative learning opportunity set up a barrier to a student's ability to learn, leading to poor achievement and the inordinately high illiteracy and drop-out rates.



Some activities are addressing math, science and English at other grade levels but the academic focus remains primarily at the elementary level -- up to grade 6. **EQuALLS** will also support programs that reintegrate out-of-school youth (OSY) into the peaceful, productive economy.



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Illustrative results that would indicate successful achievement of the end-of-project objectives include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Improved quality and access in targeted areas/schools as measured by:
 - ⇒ Completion rate
 - ⇒ Drop-out rate
 - ⇒ Student performance in reading, English, math and science
 - ⇒ Increased resources for education, e.g. increased allocations by government and private sector, more efficient spending of available resources
 - ⇒ Increases in enrollment
 - ⇒ Teacher performance
- Models and guidelines developed and/or implemented successfully replicating sustainable academic and livelihood skills programs; **ARMM** or other responsible government entities in Regions IX and XII plus NGOs and private sector have demonstrated the capacity to replicate these;
- Policy reforms sustained and improved capacity for continued policy reforms and their implementation;
- Out-of-school youth re-integrated into productive economy using cost effective programs;
- Parent-student perceptions and public perceptions show greater satisfaction with education services.

Prior to the **EQuALLS** project, the mission signed an agreement with the Peace Corps in September 2003, to support an 18-month program to train ARMM teachers of English and Information Communication Technology. This project will be extended for 18 more months and managed as an activity under **EQuALLS**.

Outside the **EQuALLS** project is the American Foreign Policy Council Asia-Pacific Initiative to support model schools for Jolo. This project also aims to improve access to quality education in the conflict-affected areas of Mindanao.

The **EQuALLS** project will be implemented by an institutional contractor together with partners from the private sector operating under Public-Private Alliances with USAID/Philippines and from other USG agencies.